



GSA Administrator

January 12, 2010

The Honorable Barbara A. Mikulski
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senator Mikulski:

Thank you for your letter dated January 8, 2010 regarding the proposed Foreign Affairs Security Training Center (FASTC) facility in Queen Anne's County, Maryland. We understand your concern with our efforts to explain this important project to the community, and we intend to fully address these concerns and facilitate more robust, transparent engagement with the citizens of the Eastern Shore community.

As you note in your letter, the Department of State (DOS) plans to consolidate its nineteen separate diplomatic security training facilities into one modern and efficient campus. This critical Recovery Act project will greatly improve operational efficiency in training personnel from multiple U.S. Government agencies for assignment both at home and abroad, as well as provide an economic boost to the Eastern Shore of Maryland.

By all accounts, it appears we did not successfully begin the public engagement process for this project. We understand that we must build trust and demonstrate our commitment to working with the community to make sure the proposed development of the FASTC is consistent with the values of the Eastern Shore.

We have a good record of meaningful community involvement on many recent projects, including the US Courthouse in Richmond, Virginia, the Social Security Administration Metro West replacement project in Baltimore, Maryland, and the Food and Drug Administration Headquarters in White Oak, Maryland. We intend to live up to that record as we engage your constituents in this project's development.

In response to the concerns raised in your letter, as well the intense interest displayed by members of the community, local officials, and other members of the delegation, we at the U.S. General Services Administration and DOS will redouble our efforts to make sure the voices of the people of the Eastern Shore are heard and that the people of the Eastern Shore are fully informed about this vital project.

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These are some of the many steps we will pursue over the coming weeks:

- 1) We will extend the public comment period from January 15 to February 19;
- 2) We will hold two additional public meetings prior to that deadline, at dates to be determined that will be published within a week;
- 3) We will ensure that we have staff at the next public meetings who can effectively speak to the specifics of the proposed project, concisely outline the process going forward, and explain the community's role in that process;
- 4) We will publicize responses to the questions and comments we have received in person, by phone, and by e-mail at <http://www.state.gov/recovery>, as well as incorporate community feedback into the proposed development plan; and
- 5) We will pursue arrangements for local property owners to tour similar federal facilities in the area.

I look forward to working with you, local officials, other members of delegation, and particularly the Queen Anne's County community to ensure transparency as we pursue development of this project.

Sincerely,



Stephen R. Leeds
Acting Administrator